

EDINA PARK BOARD
7:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
DECEMBER 11, 2001

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tom White, Dave Fredlund, Mike Damman, Ardis Wexler, Floyd Grabel, Andy Finsness, Karla Sitek, Allyson Grande

MEMBERS ABSENT: George Klus, Linda Presthus, and John Murrin

STAFF PRESENT: John Keprios, Ed MacHolda, Janet Canton, and Donna Tilsner

OTHERS PRESENT: Kurt Nisi, Laura Nisi, and Laura Masuda

I. APPROVAL OF THE TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2001 PARK BOARD MINUTES

Floyd Grabel MOVED TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER 13, 2001 PARK BOARD MINUTES. Ardis Wexler indicated she had a few corrections and questions.

First, on page four, the fourth paragraph down the sentence didn't make sense. Mr. Keprios indicated that where it says, "going to make a profit" should have been omitted.

Second, on page seven the first paragraph doesn't make sense where it says "Mr. Valliere stated that Braemar enjoyed in the prime location with high customer loyalties that will practice greatly in customer participation". She noted that she thinks it should say "will increase greatly" or "result in great".

Third, on page seven the fourth paragraph where it talks about the increase in the nine hole patron fees she asked if the 18-hole patron fee was raised as well. Mr. White replied that his understanding was they raised the 18 hole green fee for non-patrons \$4.00 and the 9 hole green fee for non-patrons \$4.00 which created an inequity. Mr. White indicated that they should add the word "non-patron".

Fourth, on page seven the last paragraph next to it where Ms. Presthus indicated that the golf dome was available for \$400.00 but is not available in 2002 and asked why that is. Mr. White explained that he thinks what happened is there was a price for league rentals in 2001 but in 2002 it was not applicable. Ms.

Wexler asked why that is, to which it was noted because there is so much competition that they are not going to do it. However, it was later noted that if someone approached them on renting the facility they would rent it out.

Fifth, on page ten the last paragraph Ms. Wexler indicated that she did not understand the question where it states “Ms. Presthus noted that she would correct it on the Edinborough Park that maximum seven member non-Edina individual has the wrong number.” Mr. Keprios explained that if you do the math on what was approved last year it didn’t add up because of a typo that was made. Ms. Presthus wanted to make sure the typo from last year was fixed. He commented that sentence should be reworded.

Sixth, on page twelve under Aquatic Center, Ms. Wexler noted that she thinks there is a word missing where it talks about the grading of the finish work along the edges. Mr. Keprios noted that sentence also needs to be corrected.

Floyd Grabiell MOVED TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER 3, 2001 PARK BOARD MINUTES. Mike Damman SECONDED THE MOTION. MINUTES APPROVED.

II. WELCOME NEW YOUTH PARK BOARD MEMBER, ALLYSON GRANDE

Mr. White introduced and welcomed Allyson Grande, the new youth Park Board member.

III. FOX MEADOW PARK

Mr. Keprios indicated that as everyone can see from their packets the Fox Meadow Park issue is not a new topic for the Park Board. He noted that Kurt and Laura Nisi are present tonight to bring the issue forward again to see what direction the Park Board might want to take as we go down the road. The last recommendation from the Park Board was to not make a decision because there was no money available. He pointed out that it’s tough to set aside and plan for development if we don’t know what we are going to develop. Therefore, Ms. Nisi asked that this issue be put on the Park Board agenda. Mr. Keprios indicated that he needs some direction whether to develop it, sell it or leave it the way it is. Mr. Fredlund asked if the property is developable and/or if housing could be put in there. Mr. Keprios responded that it would make a beautiful lot. Mr. White indicated that he thought there was some sort of covenant that the land remains parkland. Mr. Keprios pointed out that the land was acquired through a bond issue and it was designed to be parkland to some day be developed when dollars became available. It was not purchased through a bond issue to be open space like the Moore property. Mr. Grabiell commented that it’s his understanding that it’s to be developed as parkland and not developed as residential. Mr. Keprios explained that it was never decided what type of development it would be,

however with the amount of acreage that is there it would need to be developed as either a mini-park or neighborhood park.

Mr. Grabiell asked if it would be possible to hire an architect to come up with different plans of how to develop the park, everything from minimal development to full scale development. Therefore, there would be different options to choose from. Mr. Keprios replied they could definitely do that.

Ms. Wexler asked where is the money going to come from to do any of this. Mr. Keprios replied there would be a couple of funding sources as they go down the road. He indicated that they could wait until the Developer's Fund builds up to where they could tap that or the capital improvement plan could be rearranged. He also noted that items could be phased in as they go down the road. Mr. Keprios also commented that it could be included in a possible future park referendum. He noted that we currently have adequate funds to accomplish the conceptual drawing, planning and design stage.

Laura Nisi, 5201 Blake Rd., indicated that they moved to Edina in the fall of 1996 and they live right around the corner from the park. She explained that in the spring of 1997 she and another neighbor mailed a survey to 80 homes regarding the development of the park and most of the people who chose to respond were pretty positive. However, there was another group of people who were very much against it and those people were the ones whose homes bordered the park. Ms. Nisi pointed out that everyone's opinions came to light in August of 1997 at which point it was tabled.

Ms. Nisi explained that for those who have not seen the park they can basically think of it in three parts. The part closest to Blake Road is mostly flat and level, then there's a hill and then there's a big area that goes down to the lake. Therefore, she doesn't think there is one right answer that encompasses the whole area because it's a pretty unique piece of land. Ms. Nisi commented that for the most part what they see is the level part and the hill. She added that the grass grows and grows and is very tall. Laura Masuda, 6112 Fox Meadow Lane, indicated that she fears for her children because if they wandered out on the hill she wouldn't be able to find them. Ms. Nisi stated that in her opinion it does not look like prairie grass but it looks like an overgrown vacant lot. Ms. Nisi pointed out that she is very environmentally aware and does not want all of the trees to be cut down and everything turned into turf and a parking lot. However, the way it is now it does not benefit the neighborhood as a whole because it is not useable and is unsightly for much of the year. Ms. Nisi stated that it does get mowed two to three times a year, however, they leave it there and it starts to rot. Also, that is where a lot of creatures live and once it gets mowed they are killed. If it is supposed to be a nature preserve then it should be left alone and not mowed. However, if it is left as a nature preserve it does not benefit the neighborhood because it's not useable, people can't even walk through it.

Mr. Damman asked Ms. Nisi what she thinks should be done with the park. Ms. Nisi explained that she would have the front part of the park graded and sodded with a small play area like the one at Todd Park or Walnut Ridge Park. As far as the hill area either sod it or hire someone who specializes in prairie restoration and put in a prairie. She indicated that it would also be nice to have a mulched pathway down to the water; however, the people who border the park probably would for sure not want that. Ms. Nisi stated that she does not want to see the woods going down to the lake cut down but a pathway would be nice. She commented that she thinks the park can be developed so that people can use it with having only a minimal impact on the beauty that is currently there.

Ms. Masuda indicated that they bought their house a little over a year ago and noted that because of the tall grass that has decayed there are little pockets where people can easily fall and she is not able to walk there with her kids. She pointed out that the neighbors like to use that area for their dogs and a lot of time people do not clean up after their dogs. Ms. Masuda stated that she would also like to see it be turned into a small park where people can gather because there really are no other parks nearby that people can walk to. Ms. Nisi commented that she also thinks it's important to note that there are a lot of kids within walking distance to the park.

Mr. Grabiell again noted that he would like to see the property developed as a park. We should hire an architect to come with a few different plans to choose from and, as part of the process, talk to the neighborhood and get some ideas from them as well.

Ms. Wexler noted that she has read all of the material and would like to have an opportunity to look at the piece of property before making a decision on it. She indicated that one of her concerns is the safety of the children and that would depend on how much work would be done as well as the proximity to the water.

Mr. Damman indicated that he has looked at the property and he agrees that the area does need to be developed into a small park, however, more towards Blake Road. He noted he agrees with Ms. Wexler that there shouldn't be anything near the water because it would be very dangerous for the kids especially.

Mr. Fredlund asked Mr. Keprios if he has any ideas as to what he thinks should be done with it. Mr. Keprios replied that he loves Mr. Grabiell's idea of hiring an architect to give us some different concept drawings and begin the process. He indicated that he would like to have the neighborhood hand pick a small committee of people who are supportive of this to provide some constructive input. Mr. Finsness asked if it would be open to public for a public forum. Mr. Keprios responded that, when the timing is appropriate, he would like to notify the public that the Park Board has made the decision to develop the park some day when funding is available and we would like their input as we go down the

road. Depending on which plan we go with will determine how much money is needed and whether or not we will do it in stages.

Ms. Wexler indicated she thinks if they try to involve as many people in the community as possible two things would happen. First, you need to have the input of people who are opposed to it; however, giving positive choices might help to overcome that. Secondly, perhaps the Garden Council might want to get involved in this in some way, shape or form.

Mr. Keprios commented that he also likes the idea of considering prairie restoration as part of this development. There could be some real benefits to that approach especially in light of the noxious weed issues there. He noted there are some positive things that can be done for nature and the environment, as opposed to focusing on just benches, playground equipment, and asphalt pathways.

Ms. Sitek asked how they are going to deal with people who are opposed to this. Mr. White stated that he has talked to a couple of people who live there and it is his understanding that there is a covenant that states that the park could never be developed as a residential or commercial area. He noted that an area where he does see a problem is people might end up going through someone's yard to get to the park. That is something that would definitely need to be looked at. Mr. White stated that we need to come up with some ideas and then go to the neighborhood.

Floyd Grabel MOVED THAT WE PROCEED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS PROPERTY AND THAT THE PROCESS INCLUDE ENGAGING AN ARCHITECT AND CONSULTANTS TO COME BACK TO THE PARK BOARD WITH SEVERAL DIFFERENT PROPOSALS AMONG WHICH WE CAN CONSIDER.

Ardis Wexler SECONDED THE MOTION.

Mr. White pointed out that in the past there were a number of people who signed a petition that were against this and feels at some point in time they need to be included in the process. Mr. Keprios indicated that he would recommend that he be allowed the option to first work with the neighborhood and then come to the Park Board with a variety of plans along with the architect. After that is done then invite the public to subsequent meetings. Ms. Wexler added that ultimately they may choose to do nothing with the ideas.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Ms. Nisi commented that Jeff Werbalowsky, another neighbor who could not attend the meeting tonight, is both for and against this and would be a very good person to have on the committee since he definitely sees both sides of the issue. His property abuts the property that goes down to the lake.

IV. RECREATION PROGRAMS PRESENTATION – DONNA TILSNER

Donna Tilsner, Recreation Supervisor, put together (along with Susie Miller) a power point presentation for the Park Board explaining what it is she does for the Park and Recreation Department.

Mr. Grabiell asked Ms. Tilsner how are the programs advertised or marketed to which Ms. Tilsner responded it is done in a variety of ways. Some of their programs are planned far enough ahead of time that they are able to put them in their activities directory that is sent out to all Edina residents in January. For programs that are new, they send out letters and flyers through the schools as well as advertise in the Sun Newspaper and on our City of Edina web site. Flyers are also available at City Hall.

Ms. Wexler asked if there has been an increase in the number of youth participating in the different programs. Ms. Tilsner replied that during the last two years the playground program has had an increase in participants. She indicated that their new Fab 4 and 5 program filled up right away both years they have had it and they would like to offer more sessions if they could. Also this past year they had a magic class where 20 kids participated. Ms. Wexler asked Ms. Tilsner if she has any way of tracking to see who participates from year to year. Ms. Tilsner replied that right now they do not have a computer system that is capable of doing that. However, they do keep their registration cards as well as they send out surveys at the end of each class. One of the questions on the survey asks if they have previously participated in the program and if they plan on participating again. They also ask if there are any activities that they would like to see their child participate in.

Ms. Tilsner thanked the Park Board for giving her the opportunity to explain to them what it is she does for the department.

Ms. Wexler asked if the initial registration is limited to Edina residents to which it was noted yes. Ms. Tilsner explained that after May 1st non-residents may sign up for classes for an additional \$5.00 non-resident fee.

Mr. Keprios indicated that Ms. Tilsner is very energetic and creative and applauds her for everything she has done. She has been very successful in all of the new programs she has created. He is very proud of her as well as the rest of his staff.

V. SURVEY COMMITTEE UPDATE

Mr. White informed the Park Board that they had their first survey committee meeting, unfortunately only Ms. Wexler and he showed up. Mr. Grabiell indicated

that he failed to note the meeting date in his calendar and apologized to everyone for not being there.

Mr. White informed the Park Board that they discussed what sort of way they would go back to the community and when they are likely to do that as well as what they are going to do at the next meeting.

VI. YMCA/TRI-CITY SKATE PARK UPDATE

Mr. Keprios showed the Park Board the power point presentation he gave at the open house at the YMCA for the Tri-City Skate Park. He noted that Mike Damman also attended the open house, which had a pretty good turnout. Mr. Keprios explained that the purpose of the open house was to really garner what kind of support is out there for the immediate neighborhood. He noted that they mailed out approximately 500 notices to the people who live in the immediate area and of those 500 people 30 showed up. He stated that the majority was in support of what they are doing. However, some Richfield residents who live closest to the park have some real strong concerns.

Mr. Keprios explained that they've been calling this the "YMCA Tri-City Skate Park". He noted that there are currently hundreds of these across the country and what they are looking at building is a tier 2, which basically means it is greater than 3 feet in height. Also, they are looking at building it of concrete, which would be the only one like it in Minnesota.

Mr. Keprios pointed out that there are approximately 6.2 million skaters who generate about 450 million dollars in revenue per year. Other research has shown that there has been an 118% increase in the number of skateboarders over the past 8 years alone. Therefore, it is the fastest growing sport out there. Skateboarding, in-line skating, and trick bikes are not just a trend; statistics show that it is truly a sport that is here to stay. Mr. Keprios indicated that currently these youth are being pushed out of commercial and public areas and have no place to go. Skateboarders are athletes who just want to participate in this non-traditional sport. Mr. Keprios pointed out that, when he refers to skateboarders, that includes skateboarding, in-line skating and trick bikes.

Mr. Keprios indicated they are calling it the YMCA Tri-City Skate Park because it's a collaborative between Edina, Richfield and Bloomington as well as with the Southdale YMCA, which is also contributing some money.

Mr. Keprios pointed out that skateboarding is a relatively safe sport. Statistics taken from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System Survey show that skateboarding is low on the list. However, that doesn't mean accidents don't happen.

Mr. Keprios showed the Park Board a concept drawing of what the YMCA Tri-City Skate Park is going to look like when it is completed. He noted that the benefits of this are that it will give the youth in our community a place to enjoy the sport of skateboarding. Also, it will allow the youth an opportunity to take ownership and help take care of the new park. Mr. Keprios pointed out that the youth are also involved in the fundraising efforts.

Mr. Keprios explained that the whole project will cost approximately \$400,000 to which each city is contributing \$80,000 and the YMCA has committed to \$30,000. They are \$130,000 short and therefore are starting a fundraising effort and hope each city can come up with an additional \$44,000. He indicated that they are hoping to have everything in place by January 15th; however, they may need to extend that date. If all dollars are in place they hope to begin construction in the spring and have the park open July 1st.

Mr. Keprios commented that he thought the open house went really well with the exception of a handful of Richfield residents who have issues with the plan. Mr. Keprios noted that if any one of the cities drops out they will have to go to Plan B. Mr. White asked what is Plan B to which Mr. Keprios replied that he would like to at least put some money into building a tier 1 skate park on one of their hard surface areas.

Ms. Sitek asked how the fundraising is being done to which Mr. Keprios replied Mr. MacHolda is working on that. Mr. MacHolda indicated that he has talked to the other two cities and both have already started their fundraising process. He noted that the Recreation Director from Richfield shared with him the letter he has been sending out to the service organizations and they have already received \$5,000. In addition to meeting with service organizations, he has also been bringing along with him a skateboarder and his parents. Mr. MacHolda stated that the City of Bloomington has not drafted a letter but rather put together a packet of information.

Mr. MacHolda noted that he has now drafted two letters: one geared towards service organizations and one geared towards the business community. He indicated that as he looks at the list he doesn't see a lot of dollars. Ms. Sitek asked Mr. MacHolda if he has gone to the skateboard people. Mr. MacHolda replied that he had thought about Vans because they have partnered with other skate parks in the country. Also, he is looking at talking to Southdale. Ms. Sitek noted that there are a few stores in Southdale that sell skateboards and equipment that he should definitely look into. Mr. MacHolda commented that he was also thinking about talking to Pepsi-Cola and Coca-Cola.

Mr. Damman indicated that the one thing that sticks out in his mind from the open house is the negative people that were there and the fact that they called the kids rif-raff right to their face really bothered him. Ms. Sitek noted that six years ago the skateboarder kids were the ones who were causing problems but that isn't the

case anymore and that distinction needs to be made to the people who are so negative towards this. Recently it has become much more of a mainstream sport. Mr. Damman indicated that at the open house one of the kids stood up and said they need this park so they don't go to other places where they aren't supposed to be. They just want a place where it's okay for them to skateboard; they are not causing problems and doing anything wrong.

Mr. Finsness asked Mr. Keprios if Richfield has already approved their \$80,000 and if people are going to the elected officials is there any way he can head that off before they do. Mr. Keprios replied that for Richfield the \$80,000 has been earmarked but it still needs to go through the political process. Mr. Keprios noted that Bloomington does have their money in the bank. He is not worried about Bloomington but is concerned about Richfield. Mr. Fredlund asked if this is a supervised park, to which Mr. Keprios replied yes and that is one of the big pluses. The YMCA is going to assume any financial operating losses and they will also have to assume all liability insurance coverage. It is well known that the YMCA is fabulous at working with this age group.

Ms. Wexler asked if the reason that Richfield people are so against this is because it backs up to where there are private houses, to which it was noted yes. Ms. Wexler asked if there is any way they could put in some sort of a buffer to which Mr. Keprios replied that the plans show landscape buffers and they are looking into other creative means to address their concerns.

VII. OTHER

A. Park Board 2002 Meeting Schedule - Mr. Keprios handed out to the Park Board the 2002 Park Board meeting schedule and noted the different places where the Park Board could hold their meetings. He asked if anyone had any suggestions or changes to the meeting schedule to let him know. Mr. White commented that he enjoys meeting at different facilities so they can see everything that is going on in the parks. It is very helpful.

B. Edina Sun Current – Mr. White noted that he read in the Edina Sun Current that the Park Board meetings start at 7:30 p.m. Mr. Keprios stated that he will be sure that is changed so that it reads 7:00 p.m.

C. Historical Society Video - Mr. White asked who has the Historical Society video because he still needs to review it. Ms. Wexler indicated that she was next in line to view it. Mr. Keprios handed out a copy of the video to Ms. Wexler.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Allyson Grande MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:30 PM. Floyd Grabiell SECONDED THE MOTION. MEETING ADJOURNED.